



PRESS RELEASE

Vermont Public Utility Commission Adopts New Rules on Aesthetic Mitigation and Decommissioning

Montpelier, VT, August 15, 2017 – Today the Vermont Public Utility Commission (“PUC”) adopted two new rules that seek to minimize possible long-term, negative effects from the installation of electric generation, electric transmission, and natural gas transmission facilities subject to its jurisdiction. The two new rules establish clear standards that require facility owners to maintain any required aesthetic mitigation measures for the life of a project and to provide assured funding for thorough and prompt decommissioning of facilities that are no longer in service.

The new rule on maintaining aesthetic mitigation establishes timelines for facility owners to fully describe, at the time of their applications to the PUC, proposed mitigation measures such as vegetative screening and to install them promptly, helping to ensure that any adverse aesthetic effects from projects are screened in a timely matter. The rule will also improve the process of informing neighbors and host towns by requiring developers to identify, in the advance notice of the project, the need for aesthetic mitigation and what measures it proposes to address this need. This will enable potential abutters to better understand what impacts prospective projects may have on their views and other interests, and will provide them an opportunity to request additional steps. The rule also establishes requirements for facility owners to inspect and maintain these features, so that the measures required by the PUC will continue to serve their function over the life of the project.

Under the PUC’s new rule on decommissioning, owners of most large electric generation, electric transmission, and natural gas transmission facilities will be required to remove these facilities promptly when they are no longer in service. In addition, large merchant-owned facilities will be required to provide a financial guarantee that the Commission may draw upon in the event they fail to meet their decommissioning obligation. These steps will ensure that facilities that have outlived their useful life do not continue to occupy the landscape.

Both rules will take effect for new petitions filed on or after September 1, 2017. Both rules were initially proposed by the Commission on December 15, 2016, and revised in response to public comments and the recommendations of the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. They meet a directive from the Legislature to adopt new rules that ensure that all required aesthetic mitigation is performed and maintained, and that facilities are removed once they are no longer in service.

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